

The Testing of Elisha and Gehazi

by Zac Poonen

The sermon explores the contrasting faithfulness of Elisha and the unfaithfulness of Gehazi, highlighting the importance of integrity and perseverance in spiritual growth.

Scripture: Genesis 28:19, Joshua 5:8, Joshua 6:20, 1 Kings 19:19, 2 Kings 5:27, Matthew 3:13, Hebrews 10:20

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Faithfulness"

Description

Zac Poonen preaches on the contrasting lives of Elisha and Gehazi, highlighting Elisha's faithfulness in passing God's tests and receiving a double portion of anointing, while Gehazi's unfaithfulness led to his downfall. Elisha's journey from Gilgal to Jordan symbolizes different stages of spiritual growth, challenging believers to press on to total death to self to receive God's best. On the other hand, Gehazi's greed and deception resulted in him contracting Naaman's leprosy, showcasing the consequences of covetousness and lack of integrity.

Transcript

At a critical time in the history of Israel, God raised up the prophet Elijah to be His witness to the nation. Elijah had a servant called Elisha whom God selected as the next prophet to the nation. Elisha had a servant called Gehazi. It is an interesting study to see the contrast between Elisha and Gehazi.

Elisha's Faithfulness

God anointed Elisha with a double portion of the anointing that Elijah had. This was God's seal of approval on Elisha's life. But before God anointed him thus, he had been tested. As in the case of all true servants of God, Elisha too was called to the ministry, while he was faithfully doing his secular duties. "Elijah found Elisha the son of Shaphat, while he was plowing with twelve pairs of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth. And Elijah passed over to him and threw his mantle on him." (1 Ki. 19:19). Thereafter, Elisha spent many years doing menial jobs for the prophet Elijah. He was known as the one "who used to pour water on the hands of Elijah." (2 Ki. 3:11b). He did not seek great things for himself, but God had great plans for that young man. Before Elijah went up to heaven, Elisha had to be tested. And so Elijah told Elisha to stay on in Gilgal, while he himself went on to Bethel. Elisha refused to stay back but was determined to go with Elijah. At Bethel, Elijah again tried to shake off Elisha by saying that he had to go to Jericho. But Elisha stuck on like a leech. Finally, at Jericho, Elisha was tested once more in a similar way. Again, Elisha passed the test of persistence and accompanied Elijah to Jordan. It was thus that he got the double portion of the anointing - God's best for his life (2 Ki.2:1-14).

What is the message here for us? There are various stages in our spiritual development at which God tests us to see whether we are satisfied with what we have already received or whether we will press on to God's highest. Gilgal stands for the place where our sins are forgiven. "The Lord said to Joshua, 'Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you.' So the name of that place is called Gilgal to this day." (Josh. 5:8,9). Many Christians get thus far and stop there. Some press on till Bethel (meaning 'the house of God') - which stands for fellowship with believers in the family of God. "And Jacob called the name of that place Bethel. Then Jacob said, 'This stone, which I have set up as a pillar, will be God's house.'" (Gen. 28:19,22). Some stop here. But a few go still further to Jericho - which stands for the manifestation of the supernatural power of God. "The people shouted with a great shout and the wall fell down flat....and they took the city (of Jericho)." (Josh. 6:20). This is as far as most Christians ever go. Very, very few go all the way to Jordan - which stands for identification with Christ in His death, as symbolised in baptism. "Then Jesus arrived at the Jordan, coming to John, to be baptized by him." (Mt. 3:13). Very, very few are willing to walk the way of the cross - "the new and living way that Jesus has inaugurated for us through His flesh." (Heb. 10:20). But it is these few, who are wholehearted enough to press on to total death to Self, who receive the double portion - God's best. All of us are being tested today, as to what stage we will stop at.

Gehazi's Unfaithfulness

Even as Elisha had succeeded Elijah as the prophet, Gehazi could perhaps have succeeded Elisha as the next prophet, if he had been faithful. But Gehazi had to be tested first. This testing took place when Naaman, the Syrian general returned to Elisha after being healed of his leprosy. Out of gratitude for his healing, Naaman offered Elisha silver and gold worth nearly a million rupees and ten fancy Syrian suits of clothing. What a temptation for a lesser man than Elisha! But Elisha turned down the offer without a moment's hesitation. Naaman was an unbeliever and a compromiser and Elisha would receive nothing from him. The fact that Naaman was a compromiser is clearly seen in what he said to Elisha after he had been healed. He said that he was compelled to worship idols, because of his official position. Naaman knew that idolatry was wrong. But he was unwilling to sacrifice his job for the sake of the truth, just like many today. Naaman told Elisha, "In this matter may the Lord pardon your servant: when my master goes into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leans on my hand and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, when I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon your servant in this matter." (2 Ki. 5:18). Elisha would not receive anything from such a man.

The early apostles followed the same pattern. "They went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles." (3 John 7). Gehazi had observed Elisha's attitude towards Naaman's money. But he felt that Elisha had been foolish to refuse what Naaman had offered so freely. He ran after Naaman therefore (just like many Indians today run after Western Christians), told a few lies and collected forty thousand rupees worth of silver and two of those Syrian suits. Elisha who could see through a crooked man easily, immediately exposed Gehazi's covetousness. He told Gehazi that since he had grabbed Naaman's money, he would get Naaman's leprosy as well. He told him, "'Therefore, the leprosy of Naaman shall cleave to you and to your descendants forever.' So Gehazi went out from his presence a leper as white as snow." (2 Ki. 5:27). Instead of getting a double portion of Elisha's anointing, Gehazi got leprosy instead. Little did Gehazi realise that he was being tested by God that day. If only he had known what tremendous issues were at stake, he might have been more careful. We have seen repeatedly, we don't usually realise when God is testing us - particularly in the area of mammon. There is a word written concerning King Hezekiah that at one time "God left him alone to test him so that he might know what was in his heart" (2

Chron. 32:31). This was true of Gehazi too. God allowed him to be in a situation where no-one was watching him. Only thus could he be tested.

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